



Barriers to the successful Implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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About Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid is the umbrella organisation in Wales that supports and provides national representation for independent third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) specialist services in Wales (comprising our membership of specialist services and members of the regional VAWDASV Specialist Services Providers Forums).¹ These services deliver life-saving and life-changing support and preventative work in response to violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, as part of a network of UK provision.

As an umbrella organisation, our primary purpose is to prevent domestic abuse, sexual violence and all forms of violence against women and ensure high quality services for survivors that are needs-led, gender responsive and holistic. We collaborate nationally to integrate and improve community responses and practice in Wales; we provide advice, consultancy, support and training to deliver policy and service improvements across government, public, private and third sector services and in communities, for the benefit of survivors.

We also deliver the Wales National Quality Service Standards (NQSS), a national accreditation framework for domestic abuse specialist services in Wales (supported by the Welsh Government) as part of a UK suite of integrated accreditation systems and frameworks. (More information on the

¹ Our membership of third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence specialist services in Wales, with whom we have national partnership agreements to ensure our work is coordinated and integrated includes: Aberconwy DAS, Atal y Fro, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association (CAHA) Women's Aid, Stepping Stones, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Service, Calan DVS, Cardiff Women's Aid, Cyfannol Women's Aid, Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU), Gorwel (Grwp Cynefin), Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre, North Denbighshire Domestic Abuse Service, Thrive Women's Aid, RCT Women's Aid, Safer Wales (including Dyn Project), Swansea Women's Aid, Threshold, West Wales Domestic Abuse Service and Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) North Wales.



NQSS can be found here: <http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/our-members/standards/>

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Introduction

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The World Health Association states that “violence against women is a violation of human rights, is rooted in gender inequality, is a public health problem, and an impediment to sustainable development.” Violence negatively affects women’s physical and mental health and well-being. It has social and economic consequences and costs for families, communities and societies.

The two Acts, The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were published in the same year and at their core strive for the same preventative approach in creating a future Wales. It therefore makes sense that implementation of these Acts supports one another and that all public bodies and local authorities in forming their strategies consider how the aims of both acts work towards sustainable development and the well-being duty on public bodies.

1. Awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications.

From our perspective as Welsh Women’s Aid, the gaps in awareness for public bodies lies in the siloed approach of their duties under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Government leadership is needed to ensure VAWDASV prevention is recognised a key area of work in fulfilling their duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In turn, we encourage the importance of meeting well-being goals the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to be emphasised as part of meeting the duties of the VAWDASV (Wales) 2015 Act, when the VAWDASV strategy comes to be reviewed and renewed in 2021.

Welsh Women’s Aid has communicated regularly that the indicators of Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 align to VAWDASV prevention with the well-being goals, as well as being integral to the Sustainable Development Goals.



A more prosperous Wales - In England and Wales, it is estimated that domestic abuse alone costs at least £66 billion per year,² with sexual violence offences costing another £12.2 billion,³ and FGM another £100 million in costs of care.⁴ This is not to mention the costs of other forms of violence against women, such as sexual exploitation and trafficking, and so-called honour-based abuse.⁵

Most of this cost relates to the emotional and physical harm experienced by survivors. In addition, those who experience violence will be adversely affected in both education and work. Each year, one in ten victims of partner abuse takes time off work as a result of the abuse. By incorporating approaches to prevent VAWDASV, Wales will be more prosperous both with regard to public spending, and also in terms of personal ability to earn, learn and succeed.

A Wales of cohesive communities - VAWDASV and cohesive communities are interlinked. Tackling violence against women will lead to safer communities. In addition, violence against women can result in the further social exclusion of already marginalised groups, for example Black and minoritised communities, refugees, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) communities. Tackling VAWDASV will challenge social stigma, which will promote inclusiveness and better community ties.

A more equal Wales - Unequal power in relationships, attitudes and norms accepting abuse and gender inequality underpin VAWDASV. Tackling VAWDASV will lead to greater equality between men and women in Wales. This includes a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

A healthier Wales - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood. The World Health Organisation has stated that violence against women is a 'global health problem of epidemic proportions'. By prioritising the prevention of VAWDASV and the protection and support of those impacted, Wales will see a positive increase to the nations' physical and mental health, reduction in problematic substance use, as well as improved resilience and recovery from trauma associated with VAWDASV and adverse childhood experiences.

2 Home Office (2019) 'The economic and social costs of domestic abuse'
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf
[accessed 20.02.2020]

3 Estimated costs of rape (£4.8bn) and 'other sexual offences' (£7.4bn) in 2015-16, based on an estimated offence total of 121,750 and 1,137,320, respectively - *The economic and social costs of crime - Second edition*. Home Office: London.
Available at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf

4 NHS England (2018) 'Commissioning services to meet the needs of women and girls with FGM', available at:
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/commissioning-services-to-meet-the-needs-of-women-and-girls-with-fgm-1.pdf>

5 Figures for these could not be found.



A resilient Wales: a more equal Wales will arguably lead to a nation which allows the full participation of women in all aspects of public and private life. Therefore, more of the population will be able to contribute to the resilience of the natural environment.

A globally responsive Wales: VAWDASV is a worldwide issue, and many legal instruments have been produced to protect the human rights of the women adversely affected by these issues. By Wales utilising the recommendations in these instruments (e.g. fulfilling requirements of the Istanbul Convention), Wales will be globally responsive and at the forefront of developing good practice in this area.

Welsh Women's Aid has welcomed that VAWDASV has been recognised by the Future Generations Commissioners office including within the Equalities chapter in the 2020 report⁶ however the embedding of a response to VAWDASV across the well-being objectives and an understanding of an alignment of duties within public bodies across Wales has remained limited.

Strategic leaders and commissioners, that often reference the well-being objectives in strategies and funding tenders, do not often effectively align these to their duties regarding prevention under the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015. As such, there is minimal leadership, commitment and investment in the prevention of VAWDASV despite its links outlined above to the well-being objectives.

2. The resources available to public bodies to implement the Act and how effectively they have been deployed.

We welcome and appreciate the efforts made to inform public bodies of the duties under both the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, particularly in documents from the Commissioner such as *A Journey to a More Equal Wales*.⁷

The Welsh Government Statutory VAWDASV Commissioning Guidance⁸ and Local Strategy Guidance⁹ make clear reference to the Future Generation principles and guidance including the Framework for Service Design, 5 ways of Working and alignment with the local Well-being Assessment. These provide a message to strategic leaders, commissioners and service providers that their should be alignment however more clarity is needed in Welsh Government statutory guidance (for both Acts) as to how these principles are to be embedded.

Sustainable, collaborative and long-term principles focused on prevention are hard to embed within short term funding streams. For the effective deployment of the principles of the Act, there needs to be longer term investment and funding models that build sustainability. Within VAWDASV, this is a commitment of Welsh Government within their National VAWDASV Strategy 2016-2021, however is

⁶ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Chap-3-Equal.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FINAL-Equality-Wales-Topic-2.pdf>

⁸ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>

⁹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/guidance-for-local-strategies.pdf>





yet to be delivered on. Welsh Women's Aid has set out in our report Time to Act on Sustainability¹⁰ how this can be achieved by national and local public bodies. A sustainable funding model for VAWDASV specialist services is situated within the principles of long term, collaborative and integrated approach to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Feedback from the VAWDASV specialist sector highlights that these principles are not embedded within commissioning practices at present. At present the strategic commitments to the principles are not being delivered in practice through the sustainable resourcing of preventative approaches to VAWDASV. Welsh Government and the Commissioner need to provide leadership and oversight to ensure that this gap between strategy and practice is addressed, if the aims of the Act is going to be achieved.

5. Any other barriers to successful implementation of the Act (e.g. Brexit, COVID, etc.)

Both Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have had devastating long-term impacts on the people both the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are legislated to protect and support.

Brexit

We are concerned about the far-reaching impact of Brexit on survivors of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). These concerns also have huge implications for meeting the well-being goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act. Our key concerns as Welsh Women's Aid around Brexit are:

- Increasing poverty rates for women, putting them further at risk if they are living with or moving on from violence and abuse
- Financial hardship common for women post separation¹¹
- The threat to EU women's rights to public services if they are unable to apply for EU settled status
- The threat of the loss of basic human rights that EU legislation has progressed and protected, as uncertainty remains over the future of the Human Rights Act.

In a recent briefing we made the following recommendations to Welsh Government to help mitigate some of the effects of these concerns.



Brexit and VAWG briefing - updated 2

¹⁰ <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/State-of-the-sector-2020-PDFdesign.pdf>

¹¹ The Economics of Abuse, S Davidge and L Magnusson, page 4 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Economics-of-Abuse-Report-2019.pdf>





COVID-19

As with our concerns around Brexit, the effects of COVID-19 have huge implications for both the safety of survivors and the sustainability of specialist services, and the ability of public bodies to meet the well-being aims of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act.

We have recently produced a briefing¹² outlining the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and actions which must be taken in the short, medium and long-term to help mitigate these effects and prepare for future developments.

Successful implementation of the Act and plans for the protection and safety of survivors are key in solving these barriers. Rather than these events being seen as a reason to compromise or slow on implementation. In the forward of the May 2020 report, *So What's Different*,¹³ looking at the sustainable development principle examinations, carried out under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Auditor General wrote, *“the best public sector leaders will recognise that the ways of working it sets out – planning for the long term, preventing problems, working with and listening to others and taking a broader perspective – are sound principles for dealing with whatever challenges the future might hold.”*

This is the approach as Welsh Women’s Aid we champion in regards to the eradication of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. The barriers facing successful implementation can only be removed with successful implementation.

6. How to ensure that the Act is implemented successfully in the future.

If Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act is going to see successful implementation in the future all public bodies will have to clearly see the role they play in its success. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Public bodies not only understanding their impact, but also understanding the positive impact the well-being goals will have on their wider work. Work needs to be carried out to ensure a bridging of the gap between strategic references of the principles and putting into practice and resourcing sustainable, collaborative, involved, integrated, long-term approaches.
- Ensure that strategic guidance for the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act clearly aligns and outlines to public body’s duties under the VAWDASV (Wales) 2015 Act with an emphasis on how these duties support one another.
- Embedding of the principles of sustainability, long term and collaboration within budgets, ending the short termism of funding and allowing for a focus on prevention.

¹² <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WWA-short-med-long-COVID-briefing.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/Well-being-of-Future-Generations-report-eng.pdf>





- Welsh Government and the Commissioner to provide greater leadership and monitoring of public bodies to ensure practice as well as strategies adhere to the principles as set out with statutory guidance.

